

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A manually manipulable actuator apparatus, comprising:
  - a body having at least one wall element having a length generally extending along a first axis and a height extending along a second axis orthogonal to said first axis, wherein said height varies along said first axis; and
    - a manually manipulable element having a button portion adapted for human digital manipulation and at least one wing portion extending outwardly from said button portion, wherein said manually manipulable element is movable along said first axis between a first position in which an operative element is in a non-actuated condition and a second position in which the operative element is in an actuated condition, wherein said at least one wall element has a first height at said first position and a different second height at said second position, and wherein said at least one wall element cooperates with said at least one wing portion to constrain movement of said manually manipulable element along a third axis orthogonal to said first and second axes while said manually manipulable element is moved between said first and second positions.
2. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said manually manipulable element is supported by said at least one wall element and movement of said manually manipulable element along said second axis is constrained by said at least one wall element.
3. The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein said at least one wall element comprises at least first and second wall elements.
4. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said second height is less than said first height.
5. The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein said body further includes a stop that constrains movement of said manually manipulable element along said first axis beyond said second

position, wherein a second extent of said at least one wall element having said second height is sized to tightly accommodate said manually manipulable element between said stop and a first extent of said at least one wall element having said first height.

6. The apparatus of Claim 5, wherein said stop is positioned within said body such that, when said manually manipulable element is in said second position, rotation of said button portion about said third axis is constrained by said at least one wing element engaging said stop.

7. The apparatus of Claim 1, and further comprising a spring element, coupled to said manually manipulable element and engaging said body, that urges said manually manipulable element along said first axis toward said first position.

8. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said at least one wing portion comprises at least first and second wing portions.

9. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said at least one wing portion comprises a generally L-shaped wing portion, having an attached end coupled to said button portion and a free end.

10. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein:

said body further comprises a housing at least partially enclosing said at least one wing portion; and

said button portion at least partially extends from said body.

11. The apparatus of Claim 10, wherein said housing and said at least one wall portion together constrain substantial rotation of said manually manipulable element about said first and second axes.

12. The apparatus of Claim 1, and further comprising the operative element, wherein said body comprises a dispenser and wherein said operative element comprises a valve.

13. The apparatus of Claim 1, and further comprising the operative element, wherein said operative element comprises an electrical circuit.

14. A manually manipulable actuator apparatus, comprising:

a body having at least one wall element having a length generally extending along a first axis and a height extending along a second axis orthogonal to said first axis;

a manually manipulable element having a button portion adapted for human digital manipulation and at least one wing portion extending outwardly from said button portion, wherein said manually manipulable element is movable along said first axis between a first position in which an operative element is in a non-actuated condition and a second position in which the operative element is in an actuated condition, and wherein said at least one wall element cooperates with said at least one wing portion to constrain movement of said manually manipulable element along a third axis orthogonal to said first and second axes while said manually manipulable element is moved between said first and second positions; and

a spring element, coupled to said manually manipulable element and engaging said body, that urges said manually manipulable element along said first axis toward said first position.

15. The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein said manually manipulable element is supported by said at least one wall element and movement of said manually manipulable element along said second axis is constrained by said at least one wall element.

16. The apparatus of Claim 15, wherein said at least one wall element comprises at least first and second wall elements.

17. The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein said height of said at least one wall element varies along said first axis, such that said at least one wall element has a first height at said first position and a second height at said second position.

18. The apparatus of Claim 17, wherein said second height is less than said first height.

19. The apparatus of Claim 18, wherein said body further includes a stop that constrains movement of said manually manipulable element along said first axis beyond said second position, wherein a second extent of said at least one wall element along said first axis having said second height is sized to tightly accommodate said manually manipulable element between said stop and a first extent of said at least one wall element having said first height.

20. The apparatus of Claim 19, wherein said stop is positioned within said body such that, when said manually manipulable element is in said second position, rotation of said button portion about said third axis is constrained by said at least one wing element engaging said stop.

21. The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein said at least one wing portion comprises at least first and second wing portions.

22. The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein said at least one wing portion comprises a generally L-shaped wing portion having an attached end coupled to said button portion and a free end.

23. The apparatus of Claim 14, wherein:

said body further comprises a housing at least partially enclosing said at least one wing portion; and

said button portion at least partially extends from said body.

24. The apparatus of Claim 23, wherein said housing and said at least one wall portion together constrain substantial rotation of said manually manipulable element about said first and second axes.

25. The apparatus of Claim 14, and further comprising the operative element, wherein said body comprises a dispenser and said operative element comprises a valve.

26. The apparatus of Claim 14, and further comprising the operative element, wherein said operative element comprises an electrical circuit.

27. A manually manipulable actuator apparatus, comprising:

a body having first and second wall elements each having a length generally extending along a first axis and a height extending along a second axis orthogonal to said first axis, wherein said height varies along said first axis; and

a manually manipulable element supported by said first and second wall elements, said manually manipulable element having a button portion adapted for human digital manipulation and first and second wing portions extending outwardly from said button portion, wherein said manually manipulable element is movable along said first axis between a first position in which an operative element is in a non-actuated condition and a second position in which the operative element is in an actuated condition, wherein said first and second wall elements have a first height at said first position and a different second height at said second position, and wherein said first and second wall elements cooperate with said first and second wing portions to constrain movement of said manually manipulable element along a third axis orthogonal to said first and second axes while said manually manipulable element is moved between said first and second positions.

28. The apparatus of Claim 27, and further comprising a spring element, coupled to said manually manipulable element and engaging said body, that urges said manually manipulable element along said first axis toward said first position.

29. The apparatus of Claim 27, wherein said spring element is further adapted to urge said manually manipulable element along said second axis when said manually manipulable element is at said second position.

30. The apparatus of Claim 27, wherein:

said body includes a housing at least partially enclosing said first and second wing portions;

said button portion at least partially extends from said housing; and

said housing and said first and second wall portions together constrain substantial rotation of said manually manipulable element about said first and second axes.

31. The apparatus of Claim 27, and further comprising an operative element within said body, wherein said operative element comprises a valve.